

REMARKS

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1 and 6-11 are pending. Claims 2-5 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein. Claim 1 is amended, and claims 6-11 are added. Claims 1 and 10 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claim 2 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The Applicants appreciate the Examiner's early indication of allowable subject matter.

In response, independent claim 1 is amended to include some of the features of original claim 1 (except those features deemed to be obvious by the Examiner on page 3 of the Office Action), and the features of allowable claim 2. In addition, added independent claim 10 includes some features of original claim 5 (except those features deemed to be obvious by the Examiner on page 3 of the Office Action), and the features of original claim 2.

As such, independent claims 1 and 10 are believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim for Priority

The Examiner has acknowledged the Applicants' claim for foreign priority.

Acknowledgement of Information Disclosure Statement

It is gratefully acknowledged that the Examiner has acknowledged the Information Disclosure Statement filed on April 2, 2004.

Claim Objections

The Examiner has objected to claims 1-5 because of several informalities. In order to overcome this objection, Applicants have amended claim 1 in order to correct the deficiencies pointed out by the Examiner. Claims 2-5 are canceled. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1 and 3-5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ito et al.(U.S. 6,488,300) in view of Nohr (U.S. 6,036,211). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent Claims 1 and 10

As noted above, independent claim 1 is amended to include all of the features of original claim 1 (except those features deemed to be obvious by the Examiner on page 3 of the Office Action) and the features of allowable claim 2.

In addition, added independent claim 10 includes all features of original claim 5 (except those features deemed to be obvious by the Examiner on page 3 of the Office Action) and the features of allowable claim 2.

Claims 2-5 are now canceled

Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of elements as set forth in each of independent claim 1 and 10 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Ito et al. and Nohr, at least for the reasons explained above.

Therefore, independent claims 1 and 10 are in condition for allowance.

The Examiner will note that dependent claims 7-9 and 11 are added to set forth additional novel features of the present invention.

New claim 7 includes some of the features of original claim 1.

New claim 8 was added based on original claim 3.

New claim 9 includes some features of original claim 4.

New claim 11 includes some features of original claim 1.

All dependent claims are in condition for allowance due to their dependency from allowable independent claims, or due to the additional novel features set forth therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

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Amendment dated November 24, 2004
Reply to Office Action of August 26, 2004

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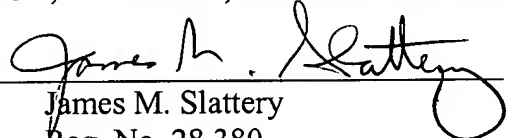
All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,
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